

Phil 330: Feminist Philosophy

Spring 2023, MW 3:30–4:45pm

Modern Languages 311

Instructor: Ding (they/them¹ and she/her)

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Office: Social Sciences 138

Office hours: Tu 1:45–3:15pm, and by appointment

1. Course overview and objectives

As the women's liberation movement swept through the United States in the 60s and 70s, communities of feminists soon began to explore how philosophy could and should respond to feminism. Not only did these efforts result in significant philosophical contributions to feminism, but feminism has since profoundly challenged, expanded, and reshaped philosophy in turn.

In this course, we will trace the development of contemporary feminist philosophy from the early days of the women's liberation movement all the way to the present, with an emphasis on trans and queer voices, issues, and experiences throughout this fraught history. We will discuss feminist attempts to formulate, answer, and later contest questions about the nature of sex, gender, construction, and oppression; pleasure and desire under patriarchy; knowledge, ignorance, and objectivity; the relationship between feminist, left, antiracist, disability, queer, and trans politics; and the meaning and paradigms of liberation. In so doing, a broader aim of this course is to consider the ideas found in these answers as *conclusions*—rather than unexamined presumptions—of a critical philosophical project to uncover and resist a social reality that otherwise appears so natural, inevitable, unremarkable, and even invisible.

2. Expected learning outcomes

My expectations are, at the conclusion of this course, you will be able to

1. Explain major issues, arguments, and debates in contemporary feminist philosophy;
2. Charitably interpret and critically assess philosophical texts and arguments;
3. Construct a well-reasoned, original argument that responds to a philosophical issue in or about feminism;
4. Discuss how philosophical reflection may shed light on contested political and social issues in a divided contemporary society such as the United States;
5. Discuss how conceptual tools may help to clarify and express minority experiences that are otherwise masked by oppressive social structures.

Phil 330 is cross-listed in Gender and Women's Studies. It fulfills the Tier 2 Humanities and Diversity Emphasis requirements of the General Education Curriculum as well as the Ethics and Value Theory requirement of the philosophy major.

1. If you are not familiar with the use of "they" as a singular pronoun, I encourage you to check out this helpful guide from the APA Style blog: <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/singular-they>.

3. Required texts

- Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Harvard University Press, 1989. Paperback, 978-0674896468, \$32.50. (Be sure to look for used copies!)
- Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Seal Press, 2016. Paperback, 978-1580056229, \$16.80. The original 2007 edition also works.

All other required readings will be made available digitally through D2L. If there are any barriers (technical, financial, etc.) that make it difficult for you to access any of the readings, please don't be afraid to let me know.

4. Assessment

Participation	10%
Short essay (2–3 pages)	20%
Final project	45%
Final exam	25%

All required assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. **An F received on any work due to academic dishonesty is grounds for an F in the course.**

4.1. Letter grades

The University of Arizona Standard Letter Grade Scheme will apply:

A	90% and above	D	60%–69.9%
B	80%–89.9%	E/F	59.9% and below
C	70%–79.9%		

Requests for incomplete (I) or withdrawal (W) must be made in accordance with university policies, which are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system>.

4.2. Participation

Participation in philosophy courses serves a wide range of pedagogical purposes: class discussions help students make sense of difficult ideas and arguments in the text; they help students learn to explain and apply concepts, analyze and assess arguments, and formulate and respond to worries and objections; in addition, they contribute to the learning and growing of other students by helping to build a vibrant, mutually supportive classroom environment that encourages questions, exchange of ideas, and philosophical reflections.

You are expected to read the assigned texts *carefully* and *critically* in advance of each class (remember to bring a copy to class with you as we will often look at difficult passages together). It's useful to keep in mind that philosophical writing is, at bottom, *argumentative*—that is, its goal is to *defend* or *criticize* a particular view. As you do the readings, be sure to:

- Keep track of what the author says they mean by a particular term or distinction, and take note of terms and distinctions that don't quite make sense to you.
- Identify the view the author is defending and the argument they are offering in support of their view (be careful to distinguish passages where the author is speaking for themselves and

where they are explaining another author's view or considering objections!), and write down thoughts and questions in the margin as you react to each step in the argument.

- Ask yourself if you think what the author is saying is not only plausible but well-argued. If not, think about why not: Is it because the author's argument relies on a false premise, or is it because the author's reasoning is fallacious? Is there a more plausible or more arguable way of formulating the point the author hopes to make? Are there countervailing considerations, alternative positions, or further complications that the author fails to take into account? Even if you agree with the author, try to anticipate objections that other readers may reasonably raise and think about how you can respond to them on the author's behalf.

Class participation will make up 10% of your final grade.

4.3. Short essay

You will be asked to write a short essay (2–3 pages, double-spaced) reconsidering a question, issue, or argument raised by one of the earlier readings with the benefit of hindsight. The essay should be argumentative—that is, instead of taking the standpoint of a neutral bystander, it should either defend or object to a particular position. I will distribute instructions in advance.

The short essay will make up 20% of your final grade.

4.4. Final project

The final project offers you the opportunity to further engage with our course readings and class discussions in a way that reflects your own interests. For example, you might want to create a zine, adapt a reading into a children's book, script and record a podcast episode, produce an online exhibit, profile a community member, design a board game, make a crash course video, or write a short story or a piece of public writing—the sky's the limit! You may also choose to submit an equally substantial term paper (8–10 pages, double-spaced) in lieu of the final project.

A brief project proposal (1 page, single-spaced) is due to D2L **by 11:59pm on April 26**. Unless you are pursuing the term paper option, you must have met with me **by April 19** at the latest to discuss your plan. The proposal is not graded, but failure to turn in a proposal may result in a zero on the final project.

Your final project is due to D2L **by 11:59pm on May 10**, and will make up 45% of the final grade.

4.5. Final exam

There will be a comprehensive final exam consisting of short answer and short essay questions. It is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 9, from 3:30 to 5:30pm** in our usual classroom. If you have another exam scheduled for the same time, please contact me as soon as you can to arrange for a make-up.

The final exam will make up 25% of your final grade.

5. Honors credit

If you would like to take this class for honors credit, please contact me as early as possible (and definitely by February 8) to discuss your idea. The honors contract will require you to complete an additional independent project that explores one of our course themes in greater depth. For more information, please consult <https://honors.arizona.edu/academics/honors-contracts>.

6. Excused absences

Please email me if there is a reason you can't come to class, but you *don't* need to show me any kind of documentation. This is an honor system, and I trust you not to abuse it—all I ask is you also be flexible and considerate when you are in a position of power to do so.

- The UA policy concerning class attendance, participation, and administrative drops is available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class-attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop>.
- The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable: <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>.
- Absences preapproved by the UA Dean of Students (or the Dean's designee) will be honored; see <http://policy.arizona.edu/employmenthuman-resources/attendance>.

7. Late assignments, extensions, and make-ups

No late assignments will be accepted, but an extension will ordinarily be granted as long as you (1) have a clear plan for completing the assignment and (2) let me know your plan by email **no later than 6 hours before the deadline** (unless the delay is justified). Likewise, there is *no* need to show me any kind of documentation.

As an instructor, I always appreciate students asking for extensions ahead of time when possible. Make-ups for missed assignments after the fact are generally disfavored, and will be granted only to accommodate emergencies and other unexpected circumstances, such as physical (including mental) health, child care, family emergencies, and military duty. We can always work something out, but it's important that you contact me as soon as you can.

8. Academic integrity

8.1. Code of Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>.

8.2. Plagiarism

I view plagiarism as a *very serious violation of the university's Code of Academic Integrity, and you should as well*. I strongly encourage you to review this helpful guide prepared by the university library: <https://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism>. I understand different instructors may draw the line somewhat differently; if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism for the purposes of our course, please don't hesitate to ask me.

8.3. Inappropriate use of class notes and course materials

Disseminating class notes or course materials beyond the classroom community, such as selling them to other students or to a third party for resale, is strictly prohibited. Violations to this rule are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students

who use D2L or UA email to sell or buy such notes or course materials are subject to Student Code of Conduct violations for misuse of student email addresses. This misconduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

9. (Lack of) diversity in philosophy

Unfortunately, philosophy as an institutionalized discipline is remarkably white, cis male, straight, able-bodied, and middle-class. This lack of diversity is often apparent just from the topics and authors typically taught in introductory philosophy courses. However, philosophy as a whole is becoming more and more diverse thanks to the efforts of several generations of philosophers. As a philosophy student, you can also help the profession address its diversity and inclusiveness problems by seriously engaging with minority authors and supporting your fellow minority students.

The American Philosophical Association (APA) has a useful handout for minority undergraduate students in philosophy, which you can read here: https://www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/diversity/Advice_for_Undergrads.pdf.

A valuable local opportunity is the Arizona Feminist Philosophy Graduate Conference organized annually by graduate students at the UA Department of Philosophy. The conference takes place in the spring semester. It brings together graduate students working on feminist issues from around the country and the world. You can find more information and watch recordings of past talks at <https://femphilaz.com>.

10. Tentative schedule

Overview

- Jan 11 (W) Introduction: Why feminist philosophy?
– bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice,” in *Teaching to Transgress* (Routledge, 1994)

A new wave of feminism

- Jan 16 (M) Martin Luther King Day (no class)
– Suggested: *My Name Is Pauli Murray* (2021), directed by Julie Cohen and Betsy West, 91 min
- Jan 18 (W) Women and the Civil Rights Movement
– *Bradwell v. Illinois* (1873); *Muller v. Oregon* (1908); *Hoyt v. Florida* (1961); *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954); *Loving v. Virginia* (1967)
– Pauli Murray and Mary O. Eastwood, “Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII,” *George Washington Law Review* (1965), pp. 232–42
- Jan 23 (M) Women and the Left
– New York Radical Women (NYRW), “Principles” and “No More Miss America!,” reprinted in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 520–24
– *Notes from the First Year* (1968) (“Notes I”):

- Shulamith Firestone, "When Women Rap about Sex," pp. 8–11
- Carol Hanisch and Elizabeth Sutherland, "Women of the World Unite—We Have Nothing to Lose but Our Men!," pp. 12–16
- Anne Koedt, "Women and the Radical Movement," pp. 26–27
- *Notes from the Second Year* (1970) ("Notes II"):
 - "A Female Junkie Speaks," interview by Lucille Iverson, p. 31
 - Kathie Sarachild, "Program for Feminist Consciousness-Raising," pp. 78–80
 - Irene Peslikis, "Resistance to Consciousness-Raising," p. 81
 - Jennifer Gardner, "False Consciousness," pp. 82–83
 - "Redstockings Manifesto," pp. 112–13

Jan 25 (W) The personal and the political

- *Notes II*:
 - Joreen (Jo Freeman), "The Bitch Manifesto," pp. 5–9
 - Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," pp. 28–31
 - Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," pp. 37–41
 - Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political," pp. 76–78
 - Barbara Susan, "An Abortion Testimonial," p. 94
 - Kate Millet, "Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution," pp. 111–12
- *Notes from the Third Year* (1971) ("Notes III"):
 - Judy Syfers, "Why I Want a Wife," pp. 13–14
 - André Leo, "ADC: Marriage to the State," pp. 66
 - Sherry Sonnett Trumbo, "A Woman's Place Is in the Oven," pp. 90–92

Jan 30 (M) The Lavender Menace

- Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman" (1970), reprinted in *Notes III*, pp. 81–84
- Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, "Is Women's Liberation a Lesbian Plot?," in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (Basic Books, 1971)

Feb 1 (W) The Transsexual Empire

- Janice G. Raymond, "Sappho by Surgery: The Transsexually Constructed Lesbian-Feminist," in *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Beacon, 1979)

Feb 6 (M) Sisterhood, whose sisterhood?

- "A Collective Editorial," *The Lesbian Tide* (December 1972), pp. 21, 29
- *The Lesbian Tide* (May–June 1973):
 - "Black Caucus Position," p. 19
 - Barbara McLean, "Dairy of a Mad Organizer," pp. 36–38 ("Friday, 9:00," and the first six paragraphs of "Saturday, the 14th")
 - Robin Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism: Synonyms or Contradictions?," pp. 30–34

- Lou Sullivan, "A Transvestite Answers a Feminist" (1979), reprinted in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (Routledge, 2006)
- Feb 8 (W) Sisterhood, whose sisterhood? (cont.)
- Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977), in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Persephone, 1981), pp. 210–18
 - bell hooks, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women," in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (South End, 1984)

Knowledge and oppression

- Feb 13 (M) Oppression
- Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Crossing, 1983)
- Short essay assigned**
- Feb 15 (W) Domination
- Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Harvard UP, 1989), chs. 10, 12
- Feb 20 (M) Enforcing ignorance
- Nancy Tuana, "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance," *Hypatia* (1994)
- Feb 22 (W) No class (Ding in Colorado for conference presentation)
- Feb 24 (F) Short essay due to D2L by 11:59pm**
- Feb 27 (M) "View from nowhere"?
- MacKinnon, *State*, ch. 6
- Mar 1 (W) "Pleasure under patriarchy"?
- MacKinnon, *State*, ch. 7
- Mar 6 (M) Spring recess (no class)
- Mar 8 (W) Spring recess (no class)
- Mar 13 (M) Forcing sex
- MacKinnon, *State*, chs. 9, 11
- Mar 15 (W) Hermeneutical gaps
- Miranda Fricker, "Hermeneutical Injustice," in *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford UP, 2007)
- Mar 20 (M) The subject of feminism
- Cheshire Calhoun, "Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory," *Ethics* (1994)
- Mar 22 (W) Multifaceted oppression
- Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," *Philosophical Forum* (1988)

Reality and construction

- Mar 27 (M) Assigning sex
- Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Of Gender and Genitals: The Use and Abuse of the Modern Intersexual," in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (Basic Books, 2000)
- Mar 29 (W) Sexing sex
- Sarah S. Richardson, "Sexing the X: How the X Became the 'Female Chromosome,'" *Signs* (2012)
- Apr 3 (M) Regulating bodies
- Iris Marion Young, "Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality," *Human Studies* (1980)
- Apr 5 (W) Constructing reality
- Sally Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction," *Philosophical Topics* (1995)
- Apr 10 (M) Against essentialism
- Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Woman: The One and the Many," in *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Beacon, 1988)
- Apr 12 (W) Subconscious sex and experiential gender
- Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Seal, 2007), chs, 5, 10

Futures?

- Apr 17 (M) Amelioration?
- Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?," *Noûs* (2000)
- Apr 19 (W) Inclusion?
- Emi Koyama, "Whose Feminism Is It Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate" (2000), reprinted in *The Transgender Studies Reader*
 - Serano, *Whipping Girl*, ch. 12
- Clear final project proposal with Ding**
- Apr 24 (M) Pride?
- Elizabeth Barnes, "Disability Pride," in *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford UP, 2016)
- Apr 26 (W) Proliferation?
- C. Jacob Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How to Have Sex without Women or Men," *Social Text* (1997)
 - Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trans Women and the Meaning of 'Woman,'" in *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, and Alan Soble, 6th ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013)

Final project proposal due to D2L by 11:59pm

- May 1 (M)** Reconfiguration?
- Serano, *Whipping Girl*, chs. 11, 16, 18
 - Talia Mae Bettcher, “Trans Women and ‘Interpretive Intimacy’: Some Initial Reflections,” in *The Essential Handbook of Women’s Sexuality*, ed. Donna Castañeda, vol. 2 (Praeger, 2013)
- May 3 (W)** Alliance?
- Serano, *Whipping Girl*, ch. 20
- May 9 (T)** **Final exam, 3:30–5:30pm, in our usual classroom**
- May 10 (W)** **Final project due to D2L by 11:59pm**

11. Respect, support, and care for one another

11.1. Materials in this course

Since many of the issues we will cover in this course are not only intellectually but also *personally* relevant, you might find it difficult to read and discuss certain course materials. I want to acknowledge that. It's perfectly understandable.

It's therefore important that we *respect, support, and care for* one another throughout the course. Please always feel free to talk to me if you anticipate certain topics will be especially difficult for you, or if you think the way they get discussed in the class is disrespectful or otherwise problematic.

11.2. How to respect, support, and care for one another

Here are some concrete examples of how you can respect, support and care for your classmates and instructor:

- | | |
|---|---|
| CLASS | – Value everyone’s contribution to class discussions; |
| DISCUSSIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Disagree in a way that takes other people’s ideas seriously and sincerely; – Challenge remarks, jokes and examples that are racist, sexist, heterosexist, cissexist, misogynistic, transmisogynistic, xenophobic, ableist, ageist, classist, etc.; – Keep discussions inclusive by avoiding talking to only a few specific people. |
| CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Try to remain quiet if you have to arrive late or leave early; – Avoid starting to pack things up until class is completely over; – Listen attentively and avoid distracting or interrupting behavior, such as chatting with the person next to you or checking your phone. |
| GENDER IDENTITY & SEXUAL ORIENTATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use the pronouns and name you are asked to when you refer to a person; – Avoid assuming a person’s pronouns, gender identity or sexual orientation based on their appearance, voice or name; – Be careful not to disclose anyone’s gender identity or sexual orientation (i.e., out them) without their permission, even if they are already out in the classroom—it can put lives in danger; |

- Never inquire about anyone's genitalia, deadname, "before" photos, medical history, assigned gender at birth, sex life, and so on;
- Use inclusive language (for helpful examples, see <https://www.apaonline.org/page/nonsexist> and <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide>).

If you feel any aspect of this course makes it difficult for you to participate fully, I want to know. This is *very* important to me.

11.3. University statements on discrimination, harassment, and threatening behavior

To foster a positive learning environment, students and instructors have a shared responsibility. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us feel comfortable with each other and where we can challenge ourselves to succeed. To that end, our focus is on the tasks at hand and not on extraneous activities (e.g., texting, chatting, reading a newspaper, making phone calls, web surfing, etc.).

The University of Arizona is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination. In support of this commitment, the University prohibits discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, based on a protected classification, including race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information. For more information, including how to report a concern, please see <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>.

Our classroom is a place where everyone is encouraged to express well-formed opinions and their reasons for those opinions. We also want to create a tolerant and open environment where such opinions can be expressed without resorting to bullying or discrimination of others.

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>.

12. Student support resources

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| CAMPUS
HEALTH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campus Health: https://health.arizona.edu - Counseling and Psych Services (CAPS): https://health.arizona.edu/counseling-psych-services - Mental Health Tools from CAPS: https://health.arizona.edu/mental-health-tools |
| CRISIS
RESOURCES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call 800-273-TALK (8255) - National Sexual Assault Hotline: call 800-656-HOPE (4673) or chat online (English and Spanish) at https://www.rainn.org/resources - Love Is Respect (dating abuse helpline for youth between 13 and 26): call 866-331-9474, text "LOVEIS" to 22522, or chat online at https://www.loveisrespect.org/get-help - Trevor Lifeline (for LGBTQ+ youth under 25): call 866-488-7386, text "START" to 678-678, or chat online at https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now |

- Trans Lifeline (operators are all trans/nonbinary people): call 877-565-8860 (English and Spanish)
 - CAPS Crisis Resources, Hotlines and Apps: <https://health.arizona.edu/crisis-resources-and-hotlines>

- STUDENT ASSISTANCE**
 - Dean of Students Office Student Assistance Services: <https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/support/student-assistance>
 - Survivor Advocacy: <https://survivoradvocacy.arizona.edu>
 - Fostering Success: <https://fosteringsuccess.arizona.edu>

- ADVISING**
 - Find your philosophy advisor: <https://philosophy.arizona.edu/advising>
 - Become a philosophy major: <https://philosophy.arizona.edu/why-study-philosophy>

- WRITING**
 - Think Tank Writing Center: <https://thinktank.arizona.edu/writing-center>
 - Writing Skills Improvement Program: <https://wsip.arizona.edu>

- FOOD BANK**
 - Campus Pantry: <https://campuspantry.arizona.edu>

- CHILD CARE**
 - UA Childcare Choice Program for Students: <https://lifework.arizona.edu/programs/childcare-choice/student>

- LGBTQ+**
 - List of Resources from the Office of LGBTQ Affairs: <https://lgbtq.arizona.edu/students>

- DISABILITY**
 - Disability Resource Center: <https://drc.arizona.edu>

13. Accessibility and accommodations

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, <https://drc.arizona.edu/>) to establish reasonable accommodations.

14. Syllabus change

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.